STRUGGLE OF NEW WOMAN AGAINST MALE HEGEMONY IN THE NOVELS OF JHUMPA LAHIRI AND ANITA NAIR

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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by

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Certificate

I hereby declare that the short synopsis *Struggle of New Woman against Male hegemony in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair* is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English under Faculty of Media Studies and Humanities. Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies, Faridabad during the academic year 2022.

It is a bonafide record of original work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Swati Chauhan, Associate Professor, and has not been submitted in full or part to any other university or institute for a degree or diploma. Further, it is certified that the short synopsis is plagiarism-free and the proof has been submitted.

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ABSTRACT

Women have expressed their worries about not only female harassment but also the emotional and practical challenges that they face across the nation. The social position of females has remained constantly low as compared to men over time. The failure to increase women's social status is mostly due to a lack of gender consciousness among Indian women, as well as the persistence of patriarchal beliefs in Indian society. The thesis entitled- *Struggle of New Woman against Male hegemony in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair*, attempts to highlight the strength of women characters and analyze the discrimination against them. The research focuses on women's struggles to exist in patriarchal settings and aims at the man-woman relationship in the Indian Diaspora. Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri are well-known for portraying disadvantaged women in patriarchal societies. The proposed research emphasizes the nuances of each fundamental factor, such as dominance, gender discrimination and inequality, liberation, sacrifice, tolerance, acceptance, social and psychological pressures, forgiveness, and bravery.

Keywords: Equality, Patriarchy, Dominance, Diaspora, Rights, Freedom, Women's Writing

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INTRODUCTION

Discrimination in any form is unacceptable. Individuals have battled against women's suffering, and a few are still battling for it in this conventional society. The equality of women has been overlooked. Even today, in several components of the Republic of India, women pay an equal contribution to the betterment of the nation, yet inequality continues. All mirror a standard notion that girls have not any place publicly or non-publicly, not simply in fashionable India but around the world, and therefore all the people should give more importance to gender studies to know the treatment of women in the hands of patriarchy.

Men have dominated the world since its inception, and women have a secondary status. Women are referred to as male co-sponsors. The patriarchy characterizes most societies today, referring to the oppression and marginalization of women in a society with most men in control of power. Rebellions against real oppression or even new rights do not always put the patriarchy into question. Removing reasons and incidents of ordinary sexism is also important for meaningful and political critiques of patriarchy as a dynamic power system that can replicate itself.

Loss of privileges is a part of exploitation. Women are either poor or dependent completely on their father or their spouses. Due to their dependency, the benefits that they should get are deprived from them. It cannot be denied privileges for women have been expanded and lined up with the improvement of private enterprise in Western nations but it wasn`t to focus on liberating ladies from abuse. Violence of all types complements each other and is essential to patriarchy. Symbolic violence is a sort of non-physical violence that manifests itself in power inequality between social categories. The state and institutions also play a significant role in the spreading of such symbolic violence. Women are considered to be weaker, less knowledgeable, and more untrustworthy, which automatically means men are stronger, braver, brilliant, and more reliable.

The intercultural and migratory movements are issues of great cultural, social, psychological, gender, economic, political, and geographical importance and are interlinked with them. Cross-cultural migration has persisted for millennia, and over the last few decades has grown. It has contributed to the rise of identification recognition issues and assimilation aspects. The migrants, therefore, encounter various problems with the people and the land they are visiting, leading to their lives suffering.

Speaking about women, one cannot talk about the misadventure of Indian women after being away from their native country. Men are equally affected by the diaspora, but women must adjust not just to their surroundings but also to the changing family relationships. They are victims of isolation and identity crisis as there is no sense of belongingness.

It is important to know the problems arising from cross-cultural migration in this context for today`s educated young generation. It has been necessary to raise awareness of the opportunities and problems in cross-cultural migration in younger generations because migrants belong to a special cultural background. Diaspora literature is a sort of self-analysis and a type of survival therapy in the Darwinian global village that determines the creative performance of surrounding forces. For South Asian Diasporic female authors, the difficulties, and problems for women because of cross-cultural encounters in immigration continue to be discussed. Diasporic authors portray the plight of women from various perspectives such as history, feminism, politics, psychology, genetics, anthropology, economics, geography, etc. A comparative study of the predicament of women actors in immigration presented in the novels and stories conclude, with a collective diasporic awareness that women face the common and varied problems in foreign countries.

1.1 INTRODUCTION OF ANITA NAIR AND HER WRITING

Anita Nair was born on 26th January 1966 in Palakkad, district of Kerala. She shifted to Chennai for further studies. She has a bachelor's degree in literature from NSS College Higher Educational Institution, Kerala. Later, she got married to Suresh Parambath and eventually had a son together.

Anita Nair's writing style is very relatable to the readers. She writes in an easy language; she makes sure that her writings depict contemporary society and the women living in it. She stresses the question of whether women really need men to be complete as they have been told for generations.

Anita Nair is one of today's most committed Indian authors. She wrote '*Ladies Coupe*', published in 2001. She bravely exposes her thoughts on women's plight in current Indian culture. Likewise, she also puts light on society's view of women and their expectations, and how patriarchal society can be a medium of oppression for women. Anita has highlighted the predicament of Indian women who are juggling traditional and contemporary. The main topics Anita Nair emphasizes are gender

discrimination and societal conditioning of women, husband wife-relationship: the assailant and repressed, and sexual exploitation of women, which includes life inside and beyond the marital frame. She wrote famous books like- *Mistress, The Ladies Coupe,* and *The Better Man.*

In the novel *Ladies Coupe*, which was published in the year 2000, Anita discusses problems faced by women in India at the domestic level, how they are emotionally tortured, and lack of freedom even after being the bread maker of the family protagonist *Akhila*, who had her own aspirations, was also a victim of home politics. She must sacrifice her desires but by the end, Nair also provides defiance against patriarchy and her own family by refusing to obey them and live the life she deserves. She goes on a journey of self-discovery where she meets six women in the train compartment. She comes to a final decision of living alone and independently and is a not-perfect delusional girl who was once trained to be a good wife and nothing else. Anita Nair showcases the patriarchal expectations of society from women and how the same society never considers the suffering women must go through.

The Better Man is a novel written in 2000, set in Kerala, India, a region known as Malabar. The story is about a man named *Mukundan*, a man both in awe and terror of his father who used to bully him during his childhood. The book focuses on the female characters *Anjana, Valsala,* and *Meenakshi.*

Anjana, who was the wife of *Ravindran*. She was an independent girl before her marriage, her parents gave her all the freedom to be the best version of herself. Everything changed after her marriage. She craved her individuality. She yearns for love and independence, yet it all ends in failure. The gap between Anjana and Ravindran was coming out. When Anjana wants to talk or tries to get close, he walks out of the room. This gap becomes a problem in their relationship, after giving a lot of chances to Ravindran, she closes the chapter. Anita Nair appears to be very worried about women's liberation, as Anjana seeks to stand on her own. After a lengthy fight, Anjana reveals herself to be a woman capable of making decisions and deciding to start a new life with Mukundan.

Meenakshi was another female character in the novel *The Better Man.* Her resistance cum power is exceptional. She broke all the rules of patriarchy to become a Naxalite. She met *Balan*, who was

a Kathakali dancer, fell in love with him, and waited for him to come, but he never came back. But her no-regret attitude was commendable. She never lost the courage she devoted herself to taking care of her mother and raising her son. She receives a letter from Balan in which he asks her to meet. Meenakshi was shocked to see Balan, who was going through tuberculosis; she took care of Balan till his last breath. Meenakshi was persistent and keenness showed that she did everything a male could possibly do or even more, showed her masculine characteristics and her caring nature depicted her feminine traits.

Valsala, who was married to a schoolmaster *Prabhakaran*, was not satisfied with it, eventually falling in love with another man, *Sridharan*. Even after being a part of conventional society, she could not care less. Valsala becomes aware of her inner consciousness and becomes his mistress. This incident exemplifies Valsala's feminist point of view via morals. She is aware that every woman requires the energizers of love, freedom, equality, and sex. She challenges Indian society's norms. She raises fresh concerns about women's gender and sexual orientation. Valsala becomes a "New Woman."

The novel, *Mistress* is a perfect example of post-colonial feminism. The story is about the main character *Radha*, who tries to fill the void of a man by involving herself with another man. She was married to *Shyam* but this marriage does not provide her with security and her own identity. Radha looks for relation and loves out of her marriage to a man called *Chris* who came to India as a travel writer she`s attracted to him and feels when she`s around him, wherein with Shyam she feels suffocated and just like a slave, a mistress, and not a wife. The quest for love is very much visible in the novel. *'Mistress,'* Anita Nair's third novel, examines premarital, married, extramarital, and estranged husband and wife relationships.

Nair's other works include *Cut Like Wound (2012)*, which introduced the fictitious character *Inspector Gowda*. *Chain of Custody*, the second book in the series, was released in 2015. [11] Nair's other works include *The Lilac House (2012)* and *Alphabet Soup for Lovers (2013). (2016).*

Nair criticizes traditional society as a tool for promoting patriarchal mindsets among both genders. She also emphasizes that education can only be beneficial if it focuses on altering people's ideas, empowering them, and liberating women. Furthermore, when society concentrates on

reconstructing the male-female connection, it can bring about solid attitudes, sentiments, and improved behavior toward both men and women.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO JHUMPA LAHIRI AND HER WRITINGS

Born in 1967 in London, UK, and currently residing in New York. Jhumpa Lahiri sees herself as a composition of three countries. She began writing when she was ten years old when she discovered she had a divided identity. She said that she did not belong in the United States, where she felt like an outsider due to her appearance and language, and that she felt the same way in India.

Jhumpa Lahiri is an American-English novelist and short story writer whose work explores the immigrant experience. Jhumpa was born to Bengali parents. her significant works include Interpreter of Maladies (1999) The stories depict the entire journey of the Indians and Indian Americans who are juggling between their roots and the new world. It depicts the loss of culture, isolation, migration, etc. Jhumpa Lahiri's works include *The Namesake (2003). Unaccustomed Earth (2008),* and *The Lowland (2013)*

Jhumpa Lahiri is a diasporic writer whose debut novel, *The Namesake*, in which diasporic characters are, *Ashoke* and *Ashima Ganguli.* This novel explores the process of cultural mixing, with Ashima being the least likely to lose her Indian identity and get overwhelmed by the new culture. In the book *Bharati Mukherjee Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri as the Women Writers of the Indian Diaspora By Dr. Prashant Sidnal(2018)* The books span from exotic renderings of motherlands to wistful memories and experiences of nations left behind to modern American identity debates. In chapter four of the book, Dr. Prashant critically analyses the novel *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri through the ups and downs in the life of the protagonist struggling between generations and his individuality. The women character here is Ashima, who struggles in the new house far away from her homeland she gets homesick, especially when she's pregnant, she thinks her children will never get to see the emotional touch of the family living in India; she ruminates on her past life; there is no sense of belongingness.

The Lowland features the life of the protagonist *Gauri,* who talks about her physical and psychological transition due to society. The story takes a turn when Gauri's husband *Udatyan*, was

involved in the Naxalite movement. He is murdered and his body never makes it home. Gauri was blamed for his death and was mistreated and asked to leave the house. She`s rescued by Udayan`s brother *Subash*, who returned from America when he heard the news of his brother. He later gets to know he was shot at gunpoint by the police, as revealed by Gauri. Subash tries to keep Gauri safe and marries her as she was three months pregnant and isolated by his parents. Society had no mercy on her. Their relationship was bound by responsibility. Gauri was transforming due to the change in circumstances around her. She left for Boston when she was five months pregnant as she struggled with the feeling of isolation, so she continued her education. In India, she didn't get the opportunity as she was suppressed by strict laws. There was a transition of both psychological and physical attributes. She ripped her saree, cute, her hair short; it was also her way of mourning her dead husband, also about giving away her femininity and embracing masculinity. In fact, her feelings of isolation and detachment did not fade away even after having her daughter, *Bela*. Even though she was out of trouble, displacement was painful for Gauri; she adjusted to Subhas with no love. Subhash was supportive initially, but later he did not like her isolated self. He tried to make up a relationship, but it was not a willing relationship as only he was trying. Eventually, Gauri led a successful life publishing paper, and books, she became a professor, but the only thing she regretted was not caring for her child in the end. She was mostly caught up between her native past and weird present life.

Unaccustomed Earth (2008) is a story of three generations consisting of Ruma`s mother from the first generation of immigrant women in the USA. She lives in full Indian avatar wearing sarees and teaching Bengali to her grandkids. She later has a daughter who is *Ruma*, which she tries to keep preoccupied with homely work so that she doesn't indulge herself with the foreigners. Ruma`s mother, an orthodox grandmother is trying her best to keep the family together and never let them forget Indian traditions. Feelings of despair and alienation can be sensed more in the first generation as compared to the second and third generations. The next generation is more concerned about the past and present presented by the character Ruma, who is more of an American individualistic self in conflict with understanding the relevance of the cultures while the first generation faces the loss of identity. The novel also expresses changes in parent-child relationships due to the diaspora.

The writing style of Jhumpa Lahiri is overly simplistic. Lahiri never uses complex words as she wants the readers to resonate with her writings so that they can focus on the facts and details of the storyline. Lahiri writes in such a way that the readers try to decode and interpret the essence of it. Her writings are full of drama but still seem to be realistic. She attempted to balance the ancient and new worlds. Her sentiments of longing, isolation, and marginalization deepened as she moved between two cultures, revealing the hardships of diasporic living. Her character reflected her feeling of belonging stress.

Literature review

Mukherjee Bharati, *Jasmine*, 1989

The book depicts a story of a young lady who was shifted in America and later tried to adjust herself with the new American way of living. Sense of isolation may be visible. The adjustments are visible whilst she has to alternate into one-of-a-kind identities.

Roy Arundhati, *God of Small Things*, 1997

The book discusses about the two fraternal twins *Rahel* and *Estha*, whose life was destroyed the societal 'Love Laws'. They live a dual life. The book elaborates how small things are not so small and effects the lifestyle of people, the conditions of people in Indian diaspora.

Bhatt Usha, *The Portrayal of Women in Anita Nair's Novels*, 2015

explores the quest for the identity of the woman. The paper also explores how Anita Nair demonstrates a woman's ability to establish her rights and eccentricities in marriage and evolve into a fully-fledged woman of potential as a human being in the majority of her stories. It focuses on female characters in novels such as The Better Man, The Ladies Coupe, and Mistress.

Joshi Pravin, Rao Subba Doppalapudi, *A study of Jhumpa Lahiri`s Women from the feminist perspective*, 2019

The hardships that Indian women encounter daily to establish themselves in their non-native countries are graphically described in this paper. These ladies battled for gender equality and identity to overcome all of their obstacles. They are adaptable to cross-cultural life and want to be self-sufficient because they are educated, employable, and professionals, and are used to dealing with difficult situations because they are ethnocentric.

depicts both masculine and feminine traits that should be present to be a balanced and better human being. The study examines Anita Nair's bestselling works, attempting to reveal the interior state of mind of the many characters, their traits, and the circumstances that compel them to alter themselves into different people. Men can be emotional, and women can be assertive.

Senthmarai T, Chandrani, M.R., *Female Diasporic Sensitivities in Jhumpa Lahiri's Unaccustomed Earth*, 2016

Though both men and women are affected by diasporic sensitivities, women are more affected. Women struggle to cope with the host culture, family members, and themselves. The female sensibilities of the diasporic women characters in *Unaccustomed Earth* are discussed in this research.

The Portrayal of Women as rebels in the literary works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee, 2015

The 'new women' are essentially aware of their rights and conscious of their low position in family and society. They now prefer to protest and fight against the generally accepted modes of expression. What distinguishes these females is their willingness to accept the consequences of their actions. Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee's female heroines are fresh and unique. They are self-sufficient, brave, and dress like men, or even better.

Davidson Manjula L, Jampana Usha, A critical study of Anita Nair`s *Mistress*, 2018

It describes the nature of Shyam and Radha's connection, a forced continuance of a marriage relationship that forces the reader to think about, not just the storyline of the novel. but life and its many complexities, meaning, purpose, and what we create of it.

Irene Lydia, *Diasporic sensibility in Kiran Desai's the Inheritance of loss*, 2020

It captures the emotion and the sentiments of an immigrant coming to the west from the east. Desai's narration about the diaspora is so preoccupied with humiliation, and racism, and it ends in identity loss, which puts an individual in the way of marginalization. Sai, his granddaughter, encounters a dilemma regarding her identity.

Shiji. S, *Diasporic Perspective in the works of Anita Nair*, 2015

The paper discusses about the issue of identity crisis. Furthermore, it demonstrates the diasporic sensibilities in the works of Anita Nair. It depicts the story of displacement and Nair's effort recreate the women characters in a manner to reconstruct her own identity.

S. Kiruthiga & Geetha, *Renewal of Womanhood Through Self-evaluation: Akhila Journey in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe, 2015*

The paper shows the how the roots of a patriarchal society works and how patriarchy imposes power on women. Through the character of Akhila, Nair portrays how after resisting the norms of the conventional society the protagonist searches her purpose in life. Therefore, renewing her womanhood and way of living life. The paper examines the restoration of relationships among women in community.

Saheleh Kheirabadi, *The Women's Liberation by Preserving their Value and Dignity in Modern Society of India in Anita Nair"s Novels*, 2015

Anita Nair illustrates the conventional lifestyles of women in the past, when their lives were limited and governed by males. The researcher of the paper explains Anita Nair's goal in creating these novels is to depict how women have been oppressed throughout their lives and how they regain their dignity and independence today.

Chapterisation

CHAPTER I- Introduction

The first chapter will discuss about women's oppression which has been a long feature of India's traditionally male-dominated society. It will demonstrate the treatment of women in a patriarchal system. Earlier, women were indulged in their households and men were regarded as the bread-maker of the family. They devoted their time with children and family, they had no identity of their own. Gradually, things changed, women started working and recognizing their worth. Discrimination against women was visible in fiction also. Virginia Woolf in her book *A Room of One`s Own,* supported women with her financial and societal independence. She was never in favor of Puritan norms of pure and selfless women. Indian modern women authors slowly started discussing how quickly one change in the world influenced subsequent changes. There was rise of new woman. Today`s women hold careers and are more than simply mothers and wives. Work and income generation among women started and they gave more importance to themselves. Women have found their way and are vying for freedom. Their identity was developed by them. Moreover, issues like gender discrimination, violence, and the difficulties of women will be discussed through the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair.

CHAPTER-II-Women's agony and resistance to patriarchy

The second chapter will discuss the struggles of women, both emotional and psychological. The torture women face in the name of patriarchy reflected in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair. It will portray the burden of the conventional institutions of society and resistance over conflicts in the hope of getting justice. Also, it will depict the evolution of new woman redefining the self in the Indian Diaspora.

CHAPTER III-A Road to self-discovery from the male-dominated society in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri

Staying in a country under the law is challenging but living in a foreign country with no known people is much more terrifying. Both men and women are victims of the diaspora, but it is more difficult for a woman as she has to adjust to all her surrounding relationships. Jhumpa Lahiri,

explains the loss of sense of belongingness through different female characters in her novels, of how women struggle to cope with a new culture, family members, and self.

CHAPTER IV-A Road to self-discovery from the male-dominated society in the novels of Anita Nair

Anita Nair explains the quest for identity, how women have become the central character and want to lead the new path of improvement leaving behind the patriarchal setup. The characters of Anita Nair show how their suffering becomes their strength and they free themselves sexually and domestically from a male-dominated society.

CHAPTER V- Conclusion

The last chapter will portray the emergence of the new woman. Both the authors depicted problems of women's weaknesses throughout their lives and the misery they endured in their culture. They want to demonstrate that these women discovered their path and are attempting to obtain their independence. Now they do not fight for acceptance; they have created their identity.

BROAD AREA OF RESEARCH

This study will examine the depiction of women's journey of resistance to making their identity in a societal setup and the significance of women's equal prominence in any community or culture. It will also demonstrate the changing role of women in literature, the evolution of women, and the empowerment of women by refuting prejudices against them from the past to the present. With the assistance of eminent writers Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair, the study will examine the depiction of women's discrimination. The research will depict the new woman with the help of the works of the above-mentioned writers. It will be a comprehensive evaluation of women portrayed in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research work will have the following objectives:

1. To address the issue of female adversity as depicted in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair.
2. To analyze the Man-woman relationship theme in the novels of Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri. in particular.
3. To examine the ceaseless and serious inner struggle of modern women to choose the mode of new womanhood portrayed by Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri.
4. To explore women's perspectives, from oppression to the emergence of the 'new woman' in the novels of Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri.
5. To investigate the female predisposition to rise during immigration in the works of mentioned writers.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that is implied while carrying out this research work is listed:

1. The research follows a qualitative approach, the proposed study investigating the difficulties of women induced by societal constructs in the works of Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri.
2. The original books of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair will be used as primary sources. Secondary texts will be used.
3. Some of the libraries like the Library of Jawaharlal Nehru University, the Library of Delhi University, Delhi Public Library, Mathura Research Institute, and Museums like the Government Museum, Mathura.
4. Interviews of the writers as well as other writers who have written about the same theme would be taken into consideration.
5. The subject would be evaluated from the perspective of women's liberation and progressive ideas in shrines in the Indian Constitution.

EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE RESEARCH

1. The study will focus on the diasporic reflections on Indian Diasporic Literature through the works of already mentioned writers.
2. The study will establish feminine literature with the help of the mentioned writers.
3. The study's focus is concentrated on women's challenges in the mentioned novels.
4. The study is expected to evaluate the Diaspora influences on women writers of Indian and Indian origin.
5. The study is expected to promote and create awareness of equality against the stereotypical system.

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STRUGGLE OF NEW WOMAN AGAINST MALE HEGEMONY IN THE NOVELS OF JHUMPA LAHIRI AND ANITA NAIR

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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ABSTRACT

Women have expressed their worries about not only female harassment but also the emotional and practical challenges that they face across the nation. The social position of females has remained constantly low as compared to men over time. The failure to increase women's social status is mostly due to a lack of gender consciousness among Indian women, as well as the persistence of patriarchal beliefs in Indian society. The thesis entitled- *Struggle of New Woman against Male*

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hegemony in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Nair, attempts to highlight the strength of women characters and analyze the discrimination against them. The research focuses on women's struggles to exist in patriarchal settings and aims at the man-woman relationship in the Indian Diaspora. Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri are well-known for portraying disadvantaged women in patriarchal societies. The proposed research emphasizes the nuances of each fundamental factor, such as dominance, gender discrimination and inequality, liberation, sacrifice, tolerance, acceptance, social and psychological pressures, forgiveness, and bravery.

Keywords: Equality, Patriarchy, Dominance, Diaspora, Rights, Freedom, Women's Writing

INTRODUCTION

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